

**BRIEFING NOTES FROM THE CENTRE FOR SHARED EDUCATION AT QUEEN'S
UNIVERSITY TO THE COMMITTEE FOR EDUCATION, NORTHERN IRELAND
ASSEMBLY**

The Centre

The Centre for Shared Education was established by the School of Education in Queen's University in May 2012.

Vision

We are an applied and interdisciplinary Centre committed to researching and promoting evidence based practice in all areas of shared education. Shared education is broadly defined as,

Collaborative activity between schools from different sectors that is underpinned by a commitment to reconciliation objectives and can contribute towards school improvement, access to opportunity and more positive intergroup relations in divided societies.

We are particularly interested in the role of shared education in societies that are divided on ethno/religious lines, and our work is underpinned by a commitment to the principle that all schools have role to play in promoting social harmony.

Mission

Our mission is to promote shared education as a mechanism for the delivery of reconciliation and educational benefits to all children. This mission is delivered through 3 core strands of interlinked activity:

Research

The Centre supports a programme of comparative national and international research that aims to enhance understanding of school-based sharing, the collaborative process, and associated outcomes. Our work is theory driven and empirically based, and we work in partnership with leading experts from a range of academic disciplines.

Programme

A major Programme for Sharing Education (SEP) in Northern Ireland is delivered through the Centre. SEP offers a model for exploring the possibilities of sharing in a deeply divided society that is seeking to build peace after a long period of violent conflict. The model can be shared globally and we are currently working with academics, policy makers and practitioners in other divided jurisdictions to develop similar programmes.

Education and training

We have an established training programme for practitioners in Northern Ireland, and we have offered in-country courses to other jurisdictions. Our aim is to consolidate and extend existing training provision and to develop a short course programme that can be tailored to meet the requirements of practitioners in a range of sharing contexts. In addition, we are in the process of developing Masters pathways in Collaborative Education and Intercultural Education. We anticipate that these programmes will be delivered in regular and online formats.

In this briefing we present the rationale for shared education in divided societies and offer a summary of our research and programme activities. Drawing on our work to date, we present the Shared Education Continuum, which has been developed as a conceptual model for representing the stages involved in developing and delivering a partnership or programme. We conclude with an assessment of the value of shared education in situations of ethno-religious division, and a consideration of enabling and inhibiting factors.

RATIONALE FOR SHARED EDUCATION

Since the foundation of the State in 1921, the education system in Northern Ireland has been characterised by separation along ethno-religious lines, tempered only by the emergence since the early 1980s of a distinctly integrated sector and, more recently, by a smaller Irish Medium sector. Currently, around 94 per cent of pupils attend either Maintained (predominantly Catholic) or Controlled (predominantly Protestant) schools (Department of Education (Northern Ireland), 2014).

In the context of a protracted conflict that began in the late 1960s, the separate education system has come under considerable scrutiny (Gallagher, 2004). In 2010, the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, Owen Paterson, argued that Northern Ireland's segregated schools system involves a 'criminal waste of money' (*Belfast Telegraph*, 2010a). In a speech some days later, Northern Ireland's First minister, Peter Robinson described the education system as a 'benign form of apartheid' (*Belfast Telegraph*, 2010b). Responding to the First Minister's remarks, a Catholic bishop argued that parents should have the right to choose a faith-based education for their children, and that faith schools are a 'hallmark of a stable and pluralist society' (*Belfast Telegraph*, 2010c).

The positions adopted in this exchange of views are resonant with more global debates that concern the right to a separate education (based on ethno-religious criteria) in a pluralist society, against the role that separate schools are perceived to play in perpetuating division and sectarianism (Berkeley, 2008; Gallagher, 2004; Grace, 2003; Short, 2003). Separate school protagonists argue that faith schools are well placed to contribute to the common good because they can provide children with a moral and religious framework that engenders confidence in their own identity, and helps them to be respectful of the beliefs and values of others (Halstead and McLaughlin, 2005). Detractors argue that separate schools, *de facto*, pose a threat to social cohesion because they lead to a fragmentation of society (Hand, 2003; Judge, 2001; Short, 2003). In Northern Ireland, representative bodies for faith-based education have publically challenged the view that their schools feed inherited prejudice and promote sectarian tension, arguing that faith schools have an important role to play in building the peace (Catholic Council for Maintained Schools, 2007).

Despite the intuitive appeal of 'common' or integrated schools in divided societies, education systems are often characterized by the persistence of

separation (e.g. NI, Israel) or, where common schools exist, by a crusade on the part of minority ethnic or religious groups for separate education (e.g. states of the former Yugoslavia). This dominance of the separation theme in divided societies is undoubtedly linked to the relationship between the school as a representation of cultural, political and religious identities, and the sources of tensions that exist between different groups in society (disadvantage; discrimination; competing claims of sovereignty; lack of agency etc.). Hence, in Northern Ireland, despite a long campaign of advocacy for integrated education that began in the 1970s, officially designated integrated schools account for only around 4% of overall provision. Other societies, such as Macedonia, Bosnia and Kosovo, have seen the demise of formerly integrated school systems in the wake of the interethnic conflicts that led to the breakup of the former Yugoslavia.

Accepting the reality of separate education as a legitimate expression of community identity, against the fact that such a system tends to deny children an opportunity to directly experience 'the other', shared education offers a model for building relationships between different groups.

THEORY UNDERPINNING SHARED EDUCATION

One of the most prolific strategies for improving intergroup relations, and the theoretical underpinning of shared education, is the hypothesis that contact between members of different groups can, under certain conditions, reduce prejudice, better known as the 'contact hypothesis' (Allport, 1954). These conditions include contact that promotes equal status between the group members in terms of power, influence or social prestige, encourages the pursuit of common or shared goals, is characterised by cooperation between groups, not competition, and has institutional support or the sanction of appropriate authority figures.

Attesting to the hypothesis' robustness, research supports the potential of contact to reduce prejudice across a variety of situations, groups, and societies. The contact hypothesis has been tested and supported by a range of research methods and procedures. Prejudice reduction has been found in the form of both subtle and direct prejudice (Hamberger & Hewstone, 1997; Pettigrew, 1997), automatic processes associated with prejudice such as implicit associations (e.g., Aberson & Haag, 2007; Prestwich, Kenworthy, Wilson, & Kwan-Tat, 2008; Tam, Hewstone, Harwood, Voci, & Kenworthy,

2006; Turner, Hewstone, & Voci, 2007a) and automatic physiological threat responses to outgroup members (Blascovich, Mendes, Hunter, Lickel, & Kowai-Bell, 2001). These positive outcomes have been found not only for racial and ethnic groups, but also for a variety of other stigmatised social groups including the elderly (Caspi, 1984), the mentally ill (Desforges et al., 1991), and victims of AIDS (Werth & Lord, 1992). Further, a recent meta-analysis (a statistical procedure examining the results of multiple studies) by Pettigrew and Tropp (2006) of 515 studies and more than 250,000 participants in 38 nations found conclusive evidence that intergroup contact typically corresponds with lower levels of intergroup prejudice. A relationship that is enhanced when contact is structured according to Allport's conditions.

Since its original formulation, research on the topic has increased rapidly and extended in new directions (Hewstone & Swart, 2011). In recent years, significant progress has been made towards understanding the underlying process of *when* contact is most likely to be effective, as well as *how* contact promotes more harmonious intergroup relations. In addition to the original optimal conditions, research suggests that contact situations which provide the potential for cross-group friendships to develop can be extremely effective. However, it is important to note that structuring contact situations to engender opportunities for cross-group friendships to develop requires repeated contact that is intimate and sustained rather than superficial in nature (Davis, Tropp, Aron, Pettigrew, & Wright, 2011; Pettigrew, 1998). The introduction of these scenarios which invokes many of the optimal conditions, facilitates self-disclosure, and provides the time and space for friendship-developing mechanisms to occur.

Research also has explored the psychological mechanisms which underlies the relationship between contact and prejudice reduction. A number of variables have been investigated and a second meta-analysis conducted by Pettigrew and Tropp (2008) reveals the critical role that affective responses, such as intergroup anxiety, empathy, and perspective taking, play in the reduction of prejudice. Expectations of negative consequences for oneself during intergroup encounters, from the outgroup directly or from the reactions of the ingroup, can lead to high levels of anxiety (Stephan & Stephan, 1985) which may lead to awkward interactions (e.g., Shelton, 2003; Wilder & Simon, 2001) or in some cases to the avoidance of contact all together (Plant & Devine, 2003; Shelton & Richeson, 2005). Research consistently demonstrates that positive experiences of intergroup contact have the ability to reduce

expectations of negative consequences therefore reducing experiences of anxiety.

Additionally, intergroup contact, particularly where it is more intimate and may lead to the development of cross-group friendships, has been found to enable participants to take the perspective of, and empathise with, members of the 'out' group leading to improved intergroup relations (Pettigrew & Tropp, 2008; Swart, Hewstone, Christ, & Voci, 2010). Contact appears to have the strongest impact on prejudice by reducing negative affect, such as intergroup anxiety, and by inducing positive affective processes, such as empathy and perspective taking.

It is important to understand that contact is not a panacea for prejudice or the improvement of intergroup relations. It is only under key conditions and through specific psychological mechanisms that positive, sustained intergroup contact may illicit more harmonious relationships. At the Centre for Shared Education, we have expertise in the theoretical and practical underpinnings of intergroup contact and have used this expertise to inform the structure of shared education supported through our programmes.

Network Theory and Collaborative effectiveness

Shared education is also underpinned by a range of theoretical perspectives which are broadly termed network theory and interrelated research which focuses on the characteristics of collaborative effectiveness. Importantly collaboration between schools should be thought of as activity which ultimately leads to school improvement.

Katz and colleagues (2008; 2009 & 2010) have developed a networked learning theory of action and propose six key features which define successful and effective networked learning communities (Katz & Earl, 2010). These features include: a clear purpose and focus for the collaboration; strong relationships which connect individuals/institutions and provide social capital; the type and extent of collaboration; creating opportunities for collaborative enquiry and professional reflection; strong leadership which supports collaboration; opportunities for support and capacity building for individual and collective learning to take place. If these characteristics are present both within schools and forged between schools they are likely to create the conditions in which schools can improve. Other related research which focuses on collaborative

effectiveness in educational contexts has also been influential (Atkinson et al., 2003; Higham & Yeomans, 2009; Hodgson & Spours, 2006; Woods et al., 2006).

In addition, Wenger's communities of practice (1998) has been useful in this context in regards to discussions about the formation of networks, through joint enterprise, mutual engagement and the formation of a shared repertoire of resources. Wenger's (2000) descriptions of effective communities of practice identify how organisations such as schools act as social learning systems and are capable of creating porous boundaries and bridging processes between each other and thus off-setting organisational myopia (Muijs et al., 2010) and creating conditions in which schools can in collaboration, share expertise, resources and create new knowledge and develop a type of collective competence (Boreham, 2000).

Research evidence demonstrates that effective collaboration can help schools improve in terms of: improving pupil performance and engagement (Chapman & Muijs, 2014; Chapman, Muijs, & Collins 2009; Chapman, Muijs, & McAllister 2011; CUREE 2005; Hadfield & Chapman 2009; Hadfield et al., 2006); impacts upon school leadership (Chapman, 2008; Hadfield and Jopling 2012; Hargreaves 2010; Kubiak and Bertram 2010; Harris, 2008); and on teacher development, performance and motivation (Ainscow, Muijs, and West 2006; Chapman 2008; Chapman, Muijs, and Collins 2009; Hadfield and Jopling 2012; Hadfield et al., 2006; Harris and Jones 2010; Ofsted 2011; Muijs, West, and Ainscow 2010). School collaboration and networking is also promoted as a strategy for offering wider curricular choice and broadening opportunity in order to meet the diverse needs of pupils (Muijs, West, and Ainscow 2010; Pring 2009).

CENTRE FOR SHARED EDUCATION RESEARCH ACTIVITY

Research undertaken by members and associates of the Centre can be categorised as follows:

- Background or foundational literature
- Intergroup contact
- Evaluation and context of shared education
- Impact of Shared Education

Background and foundational literature

Output in this category represents a foundational framework within which to locate the origins of shared education. Gallagher (2004) provides a starting point locating and comparing the education system in Northern Ireland with other societies where there is ethnic or racial division. Set within this context, education is considered as a vehicle for promoting a shared and more cohesive society. Gallagher (2005) argues that the largely separate education system which exists in Northern Ireland perpetuates ethnic division in a society trying to emerge out of conflict. Similarly, Hughes (2010) argues that separate education system may promote both ethnic and cultural isolation amongst children. Gallagher (2004; 2005) outlines how over recent decades, a series of educational initiatives have sought to mitigate the impact of ethnic division and improve community relations. These initiatives are represented as having limited impact and a case is made for the collaborative approach that characterises shared education (Gallagher, 2005).

A number of studies from Queen's University (Atkinson et al., 2007; Donnelly and Gallagher, 2008; O'Sullivan et al., 2008) and wider (Russell, 2009; Oxford Economics, 2010) sought to ascertain the extent and context of inter school collaboration to provide baseline data for the first shared education programme. Atkinson and colleagues (2007) provided a significant review of literature on interschool collaboration; Donnelly and Gallagher (2008) explored the existing context of collaboration between schools and concluded that the principle of collaboration was met with enthusiasm by schools.

Alongside this research, Fishkin and colleagues (2007) carried out a deliberative poll in an ethnically divided market-town in Northern Ireland. The poll focused on exploring parents perspectives on education; elements of this poll identified that parents were largely supportive of the idea of schools working co-operatively. This literature helped build a case for shared education and more broadly, intersectoral collaboration between schools, in turn, this led to securing significant funds from Atlantic Philanthropies and International fund for Ireland for the Sharing Education Programme.

Intergroup contact

The concept of shared education is underpinned by 'Intergroup contact' theory, and a number of research studies have explored the context and the quality of contact between pupils who engage in shared educational activities. This body of literature (Hughes, 2010; Hughes et al., 2012; Hughes, 2012;

Hughes, 2012a; Hughes & Donnelly, 2012; Hughes & Donnelly, 2012a) indicates a number of important findings:

- Separate schooling can be divisive whereby minimal and superficial contact between pupils can lead to physical and cultural isolation.
- The Sharing Education Programme offers a potentially more effective contact model than previous 'short term' educational initiatives.
- Sharing offers significant community relations benefits and improved intergroup relations.
- Pupils who engage in shared education demonstrate reduced levels of anxiety; demonstrate positive action and more trust towards members of the other ethno-religious community.

One of the Centre's largest research projects is the exploration of intergroup contact in post-primary schools in Northern Ireland. Funded by Atlantic Philanthropies, this project is a 5-year longitudinal study designed to explore young people's attitudes and experiences of intergroup contact within various school contexts. The first phase of the research began in June 2011 when we conducted an online survey with all Year 8 pupils in approximately 70 post-primary schools, these pupils will be surveyed each year of their post-primary experience as they move from Year 8 to Year 12. As one of the few longitudinal studies of attitudes and experiences of intergroup contact in the UK, the research will shed new light on the complex issues pertaining to schools and intergroup relationships in divided societies. Further, as pupils progress through their post-primary education, some will have experiences of shared education. As such, this project is uniquely placed to follow these pupils and to compare their progression with those of their classmates from across Northern Ireland.

Currently in the final year of data collection, we have had the opportunity to analyse cross-sectional data collected from the early years of the project. This research demonstrates that opportunities for contact with members of the 'other community' at school are associated with more positive intergroup attitudes and experiences. Comparing Controlled, Maintained, and integrated schools, findings indicate that pupils attending integrated schools generally outperformed pupils in Controlled and Maintained schools on measures of intergroup contact and outgroup attitudes. For example, pupils in integrated schools reported more experiences of contact, higher quality contact, and a larger number of cross-group friends than pupils in Controlled and Maintained schools. These results point to the role that the diversity within the pupil body population may have in experiences with and attitudes towards members of

the other community; therefore, a second set of analyses were conducted to explore in more detail the make-up of the pupil body within the Controlled and Maintained sector schools in our sample.

While Controlled schools primarily draw pupils from the Protestant community and Maintained schools primarily draw pupils from the Catholic community, there is a broad range in the percentages of 'other' group members within each of the sectors. Therefore, in addition to three original school categories – Controlled, Maintained, and integrated – further school categories were created based upon the percentage of the 'other' community within the school. We classified schools that had 10% or more of their school body from the other religious community as 'super-mixed' schools. Further, we classified schools that had 5-10% of their school body comprised of pupils from the other religious community as 'mixed' schools. In addition, we examined the group of respondents who were a clear ethno-religious minority in their school, Catholic students attending a Controlled school or Protestant students attending a Maintained school, whom we refer to as the 'numerical minority' group.

Comparing these new categories – mixed, super-mixed, and numerical minority - with single identity Controlled and Maintained schools (less than 5% of the other community in attendance) and integrated schools, we see a new pattern emerging. In general, pupils from single identity school, regardless of whether it was Controlled or Maintained, reported equivalent scores, while the pupils attending schools with a more heterogonous school body reported more favourable responses. For example, pupils attending super-mixed and integrated schools did not differ from each other in the amount of reported contact, the general contact quality, and the number of cross-group friendships. As such, it seems that the *opportunity* for contact regardless of school type is a crucial factor in promoting more positive cross-group relationships. Further, these beneficial effects of increased opportunity for contact on outgroup attitudes are driven by a large extent to the perception of positive ingroup norms. We can conclude then that the opportunity for contact and the formation of cross-group friendships in a climate of supportive perceived norms, rather than a generally conducive school ethos exclusively, are the key contributory variable that account for the more positive outgroup attitudes in the more mixed schools.

Cross-sectional analyses of the longitudinal data also reveal key differences *between* pupils in their experiences of intergroup contact and their attitudes towards members of the other community. Comparative analyses of the level

of relative deprivation that a child experiences, measured in the form of free school meals, reveals that pupils receiving free school meals reported less pleasant interactions, more experiences of negative contact, were more anxious interacting with members of the other community, and believed that their own community would be less likely to approve of intergroup contact than those who were not receiving free school meals. They also reported lower levels of empathy and trust, and less positive attitudes than those who were not receiving free school meals. In the context of empirical evidence that posits a relationship between social deprivation and more negative experiences of conflict, it follows that negative intergroup interaction is more likely to be the norm for those experiencing greater levels of deprivation.

Evaluation and context

There are a number of studies carried out recently which evaluate or provide contextual data on sharing and collaboration between schools. An evaluation of the first cohort of the Sharing Education Programme (FGS McClure Watters, 2010) provides perspectives from pupils, teachers and school leaders. Knox (2010) provides a non-formal evaluation of 12 partnerships in SEP1, this report reflects the perspective of teachers and school leaders and focuses on four key areas, implementation, impact, sustainability and how shared learning and school collaboration can shape policy. Studies by Duffy & Gallagher (2012; 2012a; 2014a 2014b) evaluate number of school based partnerships and identify effective practice and conditions which are most likely to lead to sustainable partnerships.

Our largest context driven work to date, the Foyle Contested Space Partnership, (see also Duffy & Gallagher, 2014b) explores shared education initiatives within *contested* spaces (Morrisey & Gaffikin, 2006). Contested spaces tend to be characterised by bounded containment where individuals are limited in their exposure to the other community because of intra-area movement, a lack of concerns about the workings of the other community, and fears of travelling to the other community; with many of these fears being sustained by intergenerational and peer influences.

Schools within Derry/Londonderry face a unique challenge that is compounded by historical division, political violence, and a unique geography, namely a river, which sustains ethnic division and effectively locates the Protestant minority on one side and the Catholic majority on the other. However, evaluation suggests that the partnership has demonstrated effective movement of over 1000 participants across the contested space and into each

other's communities over a regular and sustained period of time. Shared learning, teacher collaboration between participants has had the effect of reducing anxiety about the other and normalising the experience of shared education.

Research reveals that relationships between pupils are forming that extend beyond the classroom; for example, pupils are meeting each other outside of school and through social media. Through various educational seminars and parental showcase events, the partnerships have encouraged greater engagement between parents and schools. And through the use of schools and other venues across the city as a conduit, the partnership has successfully encouraged interaction and movement into the other community. A key finding is the significant impact of the relationship that has developed between schools and external agencies. These agencies, presenting in shared classrooms, support teachers in the delivery of the social need themes and share resources. An example of note involves the relationship between schools and the PSNI.

In 2011 the Catholic Church and the Council for Catholic Maintained Schools [CCMS] have, as part of a peace building strategy, developed a strategic partnership with the Police Service for Northern Ireland [PSNI], endorsing a programme which encourages Catholic schools to develop links with the police, including access to classrooms. This strategy however, has met with some resistance in a number of predominantly nationalist communities. Parents and local community representatives have voiced their concerns in national and social media outlets. Parents have concerns that the PSNI will use access to schools as a long term strategy for recruiting Catholics. Others argue that poor relationships between the police and the community continue, despite recent police reforms as part of the peace process. Moreover, the PSNI should not have access to what has been described as neutral learning environments. However in the partnership the PSNI regularly visit many of the schools, some of which are in Nationalist communities. The police have delivered lessons on internet safety, anti-social behaviour and substance misuse. Interviews with PSNI representatives reveal that the partnership enables the PSNI to access pupils across the city particularly in shared settings. While there are two maintained schools where PSNI are still not welcome, parents do not object to their children visiting their partner schools where the police deliver lessons to shared classrooms. Key to this success comes from the fact a representative from the PSNI was invited to sit on the partnership

steering group and thus developed a close relationship with teachers and leaders.

Given the context of a denominationally divided education system, the Foyle Contested Spaces Education Partnership demonstrates a strategy in which systematic and sectoral boundaries can be challenged. The collaborative network established between the schools offers a model of education that is effectively nascent in Northern Ireland.

Programme Impact

Additionally, research has sought to understand the logistics and benefits of sharing and collaboration, (Hughes et al., 2010; Duffy & Gallagher, 2012; Duffy & Gallagher, 2012a; Duffy & Gallagher, 2014a; Duffy & Gallagher 2014b; Gallagher et al., 2010; Donnelly & Gallagher, 2008; Knox, 2010; FSG McClure, 2010).

Comparisons between schools involved in the SEP and those who were not found that involvement in SEP directly impacts intergroup attitudes and behaviours towards members of the other community and that it does so by increasing cross-group friendships and reducing intergroup anxiety (Hughes et al., 2012). Looking more closely at those pupils participating in shared classrooms, a quasi-experimental design was constructed in which pupils participating with SEP were compared with pupils from the same school who were not participating in the programme. Analyses revealed that involvement with the programme was associated with a reduction in bias towards the ingroup, greater trust towards the outgroup, reduced anxiety when interacting with members of the outgroup, and more positive behaviours towards the outgroup including a greater desire for future contact (Hughes et al., 2010).

This body of evidence suggests that on the whole shared education can positively impact intergroup attitudes and behaviours and that it does so in a manner which is consistent with contact theory. However, not all schools and not all children will enter the programme with the same set of beliefs, attitudes, and experiences, and contact research suggests that some individuals and groups are more open to contact than others (see Dixon et al., 2005).

To investigate this possibility two shared education partnership from localities with varying degrees of current, and historical, intergroup tensions were examined (Hughes, 2013). The first partnership had been relatively less

affected by violence during the Troubles and current community relations are considered to be stronger than other areas in Northern Ireland. The second partnership was considered a 'hotspot' during the Troubles, experiencing a high number of conflict-related incidents, and current community relations are quite strained with a number of contentious interface areas. Analysis of interviews and focus groups reveal that there are clear differences in how individuals understood and experienced contact. Where there was greater consonance between school and community values in terms of contact, higher levels of engagement between the school and community, and lower historical tension, pupils expressed more positive responses to intergroup contact. In comparison, where there was greater dissonance, lower levels of engagement, and more intense historical tensions, pupils expressed initial trepidation about contact.

The influence of these contextual differences on initial pupil readiness for intergroup contact is supported by quantitative findings. Survey data suggests that pupils attending SEP schools in more divided areas were less likely to indicate that they had formed cross-group friendships and more likely to report feeling anxious interacting with pupils from the other community than pupils who were in SEP schools located in less divided areas (Hughes et al., 2010). However, it is important to note that even in a more divided context, those pupils attending a SEP school are still more likely than those in non-SEP schools, regardless of whether it is a more divided or less divided context, to view the outgroup more positively.

That shared education has been found to improve intergroup relations for pupils who attend schools that are located in more divided areas, where intergroup relations can be extremely tense is perhaps the strongest endorsement of the programme's efficacy.

Additionally this research outlines, as a consequence of schools collaborating, pupils benefit in terms of enhanced curricular delivery and access to a broader range of subjects and resources. This literature base also highlights how teachers benefit from collaborative practice with other schools both in terms of professional development through shared practice but also personally where, like pupils, teachers involved in delivering shared learning have the opportunity to work with other teachers across sectors - teachers report valuing this opportunity. Further, schools benefit in terms of developing stronger institutional relationships. As a consequence senior leaders and

governors across sectors work more closely together and in some cases collaboration becomes a vehicle for school improvement.

CENTRE FOR SHARED EDUCATION PROGRAMME ACTIVITY

Programme experience within the Centre can be traced back to the implementation and development phase of the Shared Education Programme (SEP1) in 2006. The past seven years have seen this widen out both in impact in Northern Ireland and in transferability to other contexts such as Macedonia. A brief overview of programmes delivered to date can be found below.

Northern Ireland

Sharing Education Programme 1 – (2006-2010) Introduction of Sharing Education into schools in Northern Ireland and development of models and implementation strategies. Throughout these first years of the programme approximately 3,500 pupils from 65 schools benefited from additional educational opportunities across a wide range of curricular and extra-curricular activities. The first cohort of schools demonstrated the effectiveness of cross-sectoral collaborative activity and the potential for schools to form effective interdependent relationships. SEP1 was initially an activity based programme encouraging the development of institutional links and trust through working together.

Sharing Education Programme 2 – (2010-2013) SEP2 partnerships started in September 2010. Working with 72 schools both primary and post-primary and annually approximately 5,000 pupils. In many cases the initial partnerships were based on Area learning Community collaboration. Learning and research from SEP1 looked at the creation of institutional trust and interdependent relationships at all levels of schools. The result is a more robust model of school collaboration based on common need and focusing on societal, educational and economic outcomes.

Sharing Education Programme 3 - (2011-2014) Working with partnerships from all previous programmes (43 schools making up 17 partnerships and over 4,000 pupils) the SEP team is working to take a number of key school partnerships to a higher level of collaborative relationship that compliments current Departmental policy around Area Based Planning. The strategy is to present the Department with key collaborative partnerships that can demonstrate delivery of the curriculum, economically, efficiently and within a

shared environment – providing the Department with both an educational and societal return.

Foyle Contested Spaces – (2011-2014) The Foyle Contested Space programme is a schools based initiative made up of 3 post-primary and 5 primary schools in Derry/Londonderry with a total of 1,161 pupils. The core aims of the programme involve offering sustained shared classes, focusing on a number of key areas which impact both on pupils and the community at large. The eight schools have developed an educational programme for pupils between the ages of 8 to 15 which utilises elements of the curriculum to address social issues facing young people. Together they are now sharing expertise, resources, space, pupils, energy and ideas. The issues are addressed through a shared and collaborative approach in schools using the Personal Development and Mutual Understanding curriculum at Key Stage 2 and the Learning for Life and Work curriculum at Key Stage 3.

Macedonia

On the basis of expertise and experience of the Shared Education Programmes in Northern Ireland UNICEF (Macedonia) invited the Centre to tender for a project aimed at strengthening the capacity of the Macedonian education system to promote and enhance ethnic and cultural diversity. Over two years the QUB team worked with senior officials and educationalists in Macedonia to deliver a national level programme for intercultural education. Drawing on the shared education model (NI) a plan was developed to connect separate Macedonian and Albanian schools on the basis of shared educational outcomes, that would also facilitate the opportunity for extended intergroup contact (thereby addressing 'reconciliation' objectives). The development of the programme involved key officials visiting Northern Ireland for a study tour of educational initiatives currently ongoing, and a series of 'in-country' workshops delivered by the QUB team in Macedonia.

UNICEF has now ended its association with the initiative. However, another NGO (USAID) working together with the Centre for Human Rights in Macedonia is involved in taking the initiative forward. The Centre for Shared Education continues to be involved in a consultancy role. The programme now being delivered is a state wide shared education programme modelled on the activity based SEP1 but with key learning in terms of institutional links and leadership training. The advocacy model of the SEP programmes is also being implemented.

Israel

The work in Israel remains relatively exploratory, with expressions of interest coming to learn more about the rationale and practice of shared education in Northern Ireland. An initial study visit involved presentations and meetings with Israeli and Palestinian educators. Following these initial discussions, a small number of Arab and Jewish schools are undertaking shared education initiatives, and others are under consideration.

A subsequent visit involved more substantial discussions, including an invited presentation on the work in Northern Ireland to the Minister of Education and his senior team. A meeting was also held with a number of members from key Palestinian education NGOs in Nazareth. In addition a working relationship has been established with the Center for Education Technology in Tel Aviv, which in turn has been working for some years with a network of Arab, Jewish, Christian and Muslim schools in the city of Ramleh. Initially this work was advanced through paired schools, but as a consequence of discussions on the shared education model, the schools have decided to build wider network connections. Additional interest has been expressed by Jewish and Arab schools in the Negev and a study visit by Israeli educators to Northern Ireland is planned in Spring, 2015

United States

A collaborative relationship has been forged between the School of Education at Queen's and the School of Education at Loyola Marymount University in Los Angeles. Since 2012 staff from each school have visited each other's settings to explore the context of school collaboration. In the Los Angeles Unified School District different school types including: traditional schools, charter schools magnet schools and pilot schools are often required to co-locate on the same site. This poses challenges both at local and systemic levels but also offers significant opportunities for schools to work together and in particular share resources, space and expertise. The context of shared education in Northern Ireland has proved very useful for academics, schools leaders and teachers in the US in regards to how schools collaborate.

COLLABORATION CONTINUUM

Based on research evidence to date and our experience of programme delivery Duffy, Gallagher, Stewart and Baker (2014) have developed a collaboration continuum. The model offers a conceptual typology of shared or collaborative models of education ranging from schools operating in isolation of one another to a model of collaborative education whereby schools become so institutionally close that a type of interdependency or symbiosis emerges. The continuum categories are described below. It is important to note that the category described at the right end of the continuum is best thought of as aspirational at this point; there are currently no cross-sectoral partnerships in Northern Ireland that can be entirely described as institutionally interdependent. However, given the DENI announcement in June 2014 regarding shared campuses the idea of interdependent cross-sectoral arrangements could be realised given the right conditions. The continuum is intended to describe the diversity and importantly the depth of collaborative initiatives which currently exist in Northern Ireland. The model implies the potential to evolve from unsustainable models of partnership towards more effective models of collaboration which are sustainable and focused on core school activity as opposed to characterised by other shared education initiatives which are often located on the periphery of school activity and less sustainable.

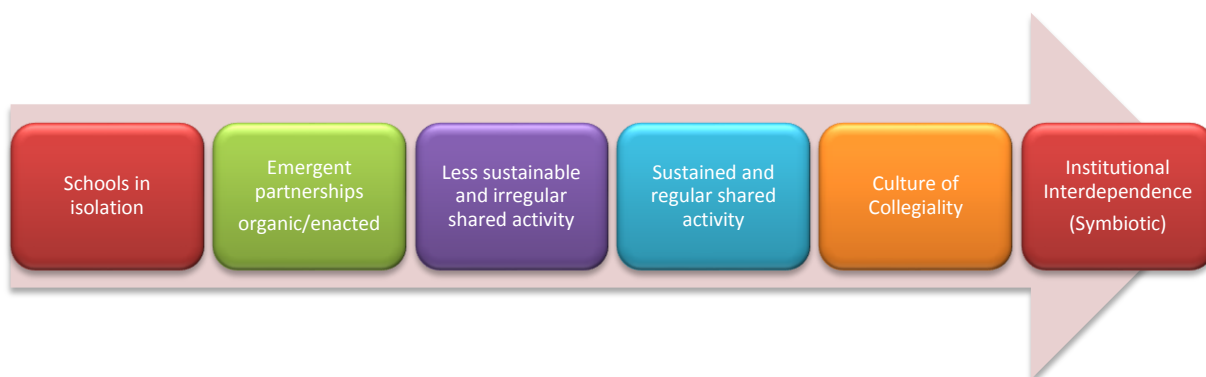


Figure 1: Collaboration Continuum: Duffy, Stewart, Baker & Gallagher, 2014

Continuum descriptors

Schools in isolation

Schools which are in isolation of one another, where there is little to no collaboration with other schools

Organic and Emergent

Emergent partnerships are those where collaborative activity first begins. This may be characterised by limited and ad hoc contact between schools. A distinction may be made between organic and enacted partnerships whereby the former is partnership activity motivated by the schools themselves as opposed to partnership activity which is motivated or enacted by an external agency.

Less sustainable and irregular shared activity

Characterised by more frequent contact between schools, activity may be defined by limited teacher and leader contact. Elements of shared learning between pupils may occur. Activity between schools is likely to be programmatic, with defined and short periods of contact such as joint school trips, visiting partner schools or short learning programmes. Collaborative activity is limited in terms of sustainability.

Sustained and regular activity

Collaboration between schools is increasingly regular and well-co-ordinated. Collaborative activity involving staff and pupils occurs over a sustained period of time. Shared learning between pupils is regular, timetabled and embedded within the curriculum. Senior staff begin to form partnership infrastructure.

Culture of collegiality

Schools have been involved in sustained collaborative activities and are developing strong institutional relationships characterised by high status curricular shared learning between pupils and increased collaborative activities between teachers and leaders. Management and co-ordination of collaboration is distributed across staff. A strong partnership infrastructure is evident and the practice of collaboration begins to normalise. Collegial relations embed. Teachers and leaders have more frequent contact and generate shared resources. New knowledge and shared resources are created.

Institutional interdependence

Schools develop a kind of organisational symbiosis in that collaboration has normalised, is based on common need, involves significant shared learning and where staff, leaders and Governors recognise the value of collaboration. Schools have reached a point where they pool resources in terms of expertise, finances, teachers, and facilities. While schools remain distinct and maintain their separate identities they enter into an interdependent relationship. Collaboration becomes a vehicle to deliver education more effectively.

THE VALUE OF SHARED EDUCATION IN A DIVIDED SOCIETY

Drawing on our research and programme experience, we see the unique value of shared education as relating to the following:

There is now a considerable body of internationally generated evidence that endorses intergroup contact as a mechanism for ameliorating prejudice and promoting mutual understanding. Shared education affords pupils and teachers an opportunity for the type of contact encounter that is known to be most effective. Hence, the emphasis on educational outcomes can be seen as a *superordinate goal* that schools can only achieve through *working collaboratively*; the nature of the intervention facilitates *sustained contact* that allows participants to develop the type of friendship relationship that is associated with reduced anxiety, prejudice reduction, trust building and perspective-taking. Shared education, because it is curriculum based, requires considerably more commitment from schools than short-term, one-off projects. For the initiative to work, a high degree of *institutional support* is required. Finally, schools participate in contact on an *equal basis* and, by dint of the fact that schools are separated on ethno-religious grounds, *identity is salient* throughout, not least in the form of the uniforms worn by children who move between schools.

Attempts to build community relations through education in divided societies tend to fall into two categories; the establishment of desegregated schools, and the promotion of policy initiatives that support short-term contact initiatives. Often, as is the case in Northern Ireland, both approaches exist as options within the dominant divided system. Research has shown that integrated education, whilst an effective mechanism for relationship building, has only limited appeal – with the overwhelming majority of parents in Northern Ireland and other divided societies where such schools are an option (eg Israel), opting to send their children to separate schools. It has also been shown that short-term contact initiatives, whilst sometimes symbolically important, tend to be limited in terms of positive attitudinal and behavioral outcomes impact, and can sometimes exacerbate tensions between groups. The shared education approach bridges a gap between integrated education which has very limited reach, and short-term, largely ineffective, contact initiatives, by offering pupils and teachers an opportunity for engagement that is sustained and curriculum based.

The elevation of educational outcomes as opposed to the foregrounding of reconciliation objectives, enhances the appeal of the initiative in divided

contexts amongst stakeholders who are wary of state sponsored 'community relations' initiatives, fearing that the latter are designed to denigrate or assimilate distinct identity groups.

The fact that shared education objectives are consistent with the educational outcomes prioritized by schools can enhance engagement. Unlike other contact initiatives that are often resource-intensive, and perceived as achieving little in respect of educational targets, there are tangible associated benefits to be accrued from participation in shared education.

Educators in divided societies are often fearful of engaging with controversial issues in the classroom. In Northern Ireland and other jurisdictions this is often associated with the absence of appropriate training, and a perceived conflict in the minds of teachers between the role of teacher as a Professional, and the extent to which they (teachers) should be responsible for taking on the ills of wider society. A core strand of the Shared Education Programme is the provision of support for those delivering the initiative - potentially assuaging the fears of those who might be committed to community relations work but are anxious about undertaking it, and better preparing them for it.

BARRIERS AND ENABLERS

Local Level

Given that shared education is a relatively new educational approach, research and evaluation is essential to help contextualise school partnerships. The local research highlights a number of common logistical challenges that often accompany sharing and collaboration between schools (Donnelly & Gallagher, 2008; Duffy & Gallagher, 2012, 2014a, 2014b; Knox, 2010). These include:

- Location and proximity of partner schools
- Travel time between schools
- Timetabling
- Adjusting to cultural differences in schools

Interviews with teachers and school leaders reveal that proximity, travel between schools and timetabling are the most significant logistical issues facing schools in partnership. Importantly these issues are often interrelated. However the most effective partnerships find solutions to these thus providing key learning for existing and emerging partnerships.

By design, pupils who are involved in shared learning will visit each other's schools and this requires elements of time and travel from one site to another. In some contexts pupils can walk between schools but in other settings transport is required. Schools that are closely located together find it easiest to engage in effective collaboration, but even when schools operate at a distance, innovative approaches to a re-thinking of the traditional school curriculum provide a means by which little or no teaching time is lost. Research from the Foyle Contested Space Partnership suggests that pupils not only enjoy the experience of travelling, but highlight that, in the absence of shared education they would be reluctant or anxious about visiting each other's community given the context of city.

Timetabling differences between schools can present logistical issues as the structure of the timetable often differs between schools. This practical challenge has been overcome through a variety of means, including: aligning sections, but not all, of the timetable; co-ordinating an agreed time for shared learning to take place; and strategically positioning shared lessons on timetables to facilitate travel time.

The practice of shared education exposes pupils and educators to a broad array of differences in terms of cultural practice and, more prosaically, the ways schools are managed and operate. For example in some partnerships, participants talked about cultural differences such as the use of national and religious symbols, cultural terminology, and different denominational practices and rituals. In other contexts the challenges for pupils have been about adjusting to gender differences in shared classrooms. Others have talked about adjusting to different school rules and policies in their partner school. Many pupils talked about initial anxieties about taking part in shared lessons but over time these anxieties have abated and pupils talk more readily about feeling more confident and enjoying shared education. Teachers have talked about adjusting to differences in approaches to teaching and learning and co-teaching.

Macro-level

At macro level a particular barrier is the lack of agreed policy around shared education. A number of key policy and strategy documents reference shared education and the value of collaboration between schools in terms of societal, educational and economic benefits. However these have not been presented as part of a coordinated policy strategy and there remains no agreed definition

of shared education in policy or legislation. The absence of agreement around definition has led to a policy vacuum. In turn this affects the depth of shared education activity and limits its potential for change. For example the basic understanding of Shared Education being activity between schools from different sectors can be anything from limited activity represented by joint extra-curricular trips to regular and sustained curricular activity leading to enhanced educational outcomes. The absence provides a space to present shared education as being light touch and as having limited potential for systemic change and therefore supporting the current status quo within the education system. A coordinated policy strategy would include a clear agreed definition and would involve a review of key DENI policies and initiatives including Area Learning Communities, the Entitlement Framework, the Sustainable Schools policy and the current Area Based Planning process. This lack of clarity is a clear barrier to the advancement of Shared Education. To the contrary support within policy is a vital enabler.

As such, the most significant enabler for Shared Education would be to create legislation providing a consensus around definition and the basis for development of policy and strategy. Currently the Department has presented its externally supported Shared Education initiatives to date (SiEP, SESP) as being pilot programmes that may lead to future policy. The research and programme evidence from the SEP initiatives of QUB and others provides the foundation for legislation and policy. There is no longer a requirement for further piloting. Legislation is required to move implementation into the system itself rather than being at the pilot level.

Shared education and the theory that underpins it places emphasis on facilitation of cooperative and harmonious encounters and as shown by the quantitative research reported earlier, there is little doubt that attitudes towards the 'out' group do change for the good as a consequence of participation. However, the challenge faced is to ensure that the nature of the encounters does not intentionally or unintentionally suppress the differences that preserve the institutional, social, and political structures which, in turn, can perpetuate stereotypes and prejudices, particularly in contexts characterised by asymmetries of power and status between groups (Abu-Nimer, 2004; Dixon, Durrheim & Tredoux, 2005; Nagda & Derr, 2004). The problem is exacerbated in Northern Ireland where cross-cutting cleavages in the education system are reflected not only in faith orientation but also in social class leading the Ministerial Advisory Group on Shared Education to

recommend that the objectives of shared education can only be achieved within a more fully egalitarian system of post-primary education (MAG, 2014).

Duffy and Gallagher (2014a; 2014b) identified a series of collaborative effectiveness characteristics which include: the formation of a strong collective identity, which in turn is supported by a partnership infrastructure; school leaders needing to be involved and supportive of the partnership. An effective partnership is one where personal and professional relationships flourish through sustained and regular contact, and where additional opportunities for collaboration are encouraged and seized. The extent and quality of the collaborative activity between individuals (pupils, teachers and leaders) is important. Effective collaboration should provide opportunities for professional development and capacity building for teachers and leaders. Collaboration should produce tangible collective commodities in the form of shared resources, new knowledge and joint approaches.

The most effective collaborators are those where shared activities permeate throughout schools and are not bounded or constrained by delineated activities. The most effective and sustainable models demonstrate the capacity to innovate and evolve. Importantly shared learning needs to be located in core curricular areas. When this occurs, the practice of collaboration and shared learning is more likely to become embedded in schools and develop new habits of sustainable activity.

Based on our research, the partnership infrastructure is an important characteristic of effectiveness. This infrastructure is underpinned by supportive advocates at strategic levels, and should include school leaders and committed teachers to oversee the management of the partnership. In some cases we have observed partnerships which have invited representatives from external bodies to assist and advise schools in the delivery of collaborative activity (examples include representatives from community and statutory agencies or local education authorities). Our evidence suggests that the more effective a partnership becomes, the more likely a strong institutional relationship will develop based on mutual benefit. When this occurs schools are more likely to be able to identify common needs and share resources.

Within Northern Ireland, our strongest partnerships provide clear evidence of school improvement outcomes including: sustainable teacher and school leader networks which offer capacity building and professional development opportunities for staff; partnerships share resources, such as expertise, space

and equipment; schools generate new knowledge and practice, while working together enables schools to offer pupils a broader curricular choice. Our research also indicates that pupils find shared learning impactful and engaging.

Shared education and collaboration offers social benefits, including: the movement of pupils, educators and parents across contested space settings into each other's communities; provides meaningful contact between participants from different cultural and religious backgrounds; and helps form social relationships between participants. In some partnerships, the relationship between schools, and external statutory and voluntary agencies has developed or improved.

SUMMARY

Accepting the reality of separate education in divided societies, against the fact that such a system tends to deny children an opportunity to directly experience 'the other', shared education offers a useful model for building relationships between different groups.

There is clearly an appetite for shared education in Northern Ireland and in other jurisdictions. The Centre for Shared Education at Queen's operates as a hub for research, programme and educational activity associated with the shared education agenda.

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BRIEFING NOTES FROM THE CENTRE FOR SHARED EDUCATION AT QUEEN'S UNIVERSITY TO THE COMMITTEE FOR EDUCATION, NORTHERN IRELAND ASSEMBLY

Attempts to build community relations through education in divided societies tend to fall into two categories; the establishment of desegregated schools, and the promotion of policy initiatives that support short-term contact initiatives. Often, as is the case in Northern Ireland, both approaches exist as options within the dominant divided system. Research has shown that integrated education, whilst an effective mechanism for relationship building, has only limited appeal – with the overwhelming majority of parents in Northern Ireland and other divided societies where such schools are an option, opting to send their children to separate schools. It has also been shown that short-term contact initiatives, whilst sometimes symbolically important, tend to be limited in terms of positive attitudinal and behavioral outcomes impact, and can sometimes exacerbate tensions between groups.

Accepting the reality of separate education as a legitimate expression of community identity, against the fact that such a system tends to deny children an opportunity to directly experience 'the other', shared education nurtures distinct social identities, whilst simultaneously offering a model for building relationships between different groups. At the Centre for Shared Education at Queen's University we broadly define shared education as,

Collaborative activity between schools from different sectors that is underpinned by a commitment to reconciliation objectives and can contribute towards school improvement, access to opportunity and more positive intergroup relations in divided societies.

Sharing Education promotes sharing and collaboration between schools, where pupils from different schools can learn together and where schools and teachers can share resources and expertise with the aim of developing sustainable institutional relationships. In doing so, the Sharing Education Programme (SEP) is committed to enhancing pupils' educational opportunities, demonstrating how resources between schools can be shared and used more effectively, while providing enhanced opportunities to explore denominational and cultural differences. A core element of SEP involves creating cross-sector collaborative networks of schools which offer shared, regular and sustained learning experiences for pupils in core curricular areas.

The School of Education at Queen's University Belfast has led the way in regards to promoting shared education through research and supporting schools involved in shared learning and broader collaboration. The Sharing Education Programme has been supporting school partnerships since 2007, broadly this has involved 41

partnerships, involving 137 primary and post primary schools and over 10,000 pupils all supported by teacher and school leader networks across Northern Ireland.

The Centre for Shared Education at the School of Education also supports a programme of comparative national and international research that aims to enhance understanding of school-based sharing, the collaborative process, and associated outcomes. Our work is theory driven and empirically based, and we work in partnership with leading experts from a range of academic disciplines.

The collaborative activity supported through shared education responds to claims that integrated education has limited reach, and contact initiatives have been short-term and largely ineffective, by offering pupils and teachers an opportunity for engagement that is sustained and curriculum based. The elevation of educational outcomes as opposed to the foregrounding of reconciliation objectives, enhances the appeal of the initiative in divided contexts amongst stakeholders who are wary of state sponsored 'community relations' initiatives, fearing that the latter are designed to denigrate or assimilate distinct identity groups. The fact that shared education objectives are consistent with the educational outcomes prioritized by schools can enhance engagement. Unlike other contact initiatives that are often resource-intensive, and perceived as achieving little in respect of educational targets, there are tangible associated benefits to be accrued from participation in shared education.

A key theoretical underpinning of shared education is based upon the contact hypothesis. As one of the most prolific strategies for improving intergroup relations, the hypothesis states that contact between members of different groups can, under certain conditions, reduce prejudice. These conditions include contact that promotes equal status between the group members in terms of power, influence or social prestige, encourages the pursuit of common or shared goals, is characterised by cooperation between groups, not competition, and has sanction of appropriate authority figures. In addition to the original optimal conditions, research suggests that contact situations which are intimate and sustained, rather than superficial in nature, facilitates self-disclosure and provides the time and space for friendship-developing mechanisms to occur. There is now a considerable body of internationally generated evidence that endorses intergroup contact as a mechanism for ameliorating prejudice and promoting mutual understanding. Further, this work suggests that contact appears to have the strongest impact on prejudice by reducing negative affect, such as intergroup anxiety, and by inducing positive affective processes, such as empathy and perspective taking.

It is important to understand that contact is not a panacea for prejudice. It is only under these key conditions and through specific psychological mechanisms that positive, sustained intergroup contact may illicit more harmonious relationships. At

the Centre for Shared Education, we have expertise in the theoretical and practical underpinnings of intergroup contact and have used this expertise to inform the structure of shared education supported through our programmes. As such, shared education affords pupils and teachers an opportunity for the type of contact encounter that is known to be most effective. Hence, the emphasis on educational outcomes can be seen as a *superordinate goal* that schools can only achieve through *working collaboratively*; the nature of the intervention facilitates *sustained contact* that allows participants to develop the type of friendship relationship that is associated with reduced anxiety, prejudice reduction, trust building and perspective-taking. Shared education, because it is curriculum based, requires considerably more commitment from schools than short-term, one-off projects. For the initiative to work, a high degree of *institutional support* is required. Finally, schools participate in contact on an *equal basis* and, by dint of the fact that schools are separated on ethno-religious grounds, *identity is salient* throughout, not least in the form of the uniforms worn by children who move between schools.

Pupils who engage in shared education demonstrate reduced levels of anxiety; demonstrate positive action tendencies and more trust towards members of the other ethno-religious community. Further, shared education has been found to improve intergroup relations for pupils who attend schools that are located in more divided areas, where intergroup relations can be extremely tense. This is perhaps the strongest endorsement of the programme's efficacy. In total, research suggests that shared education can positively impact intergroup attitudes and behaviours and that it does so in a manner which is consistent with contact theory.

Shared education is also underpinned by a range of theoretical perspectives which are broadly termed network theories and interrelated research which focuses on the characteristics of collaborative effectiveness. Importantly collaboration between schools should be thought of activity which ultimately leads to school improvement.

Given the divided nature of education in Northern Ireland shared education offers a means of creating porous boundaries and bridging mechanisms between the sectors and thus creating the conditions where schools can, in collaboration, share expertise, resources, create new knowledge and develop a type of interdependent and collective competence.

Effective partnerships demonstrate a clear purpose and focus for the collaboration; strong relationships which connect individuals/institutions and provide social capital; the type and extent of collaboration; creating opportunities for collaborative enquiry and professional reflection; examining how leadership supports collaboration; the types of support and capacity building for individual and collective learning to take place. If these characteristics are present both within schools and forged between schools they are likely to create the conditions in which schools can improve.

At the local level, interviews with teachers and school leaders reveal that proximity, travel between schools and timetabling are the most significant logistical issues facing schools in partnership. Importantly these issues are often inter-related. However the most effective partnerships find solutions to these thus providing key learning for existing and emerging partnerships. At macro level a particular barrier is the lack of agreed policy around shared education. A number of key policy and strategy documents reference shared education and the value of collaboration between schools in terms of societal, educational and economic benefits. However these have not been presented as part of a coordinated policy strategy and there remains no agreed definition of shared education in policy or legislation. The absence of agreement around definition has led to a policy vacuum. In turn this affects the depth of shared education activity and limits its potential for change. As such, the most significant enabler for Shared Education would be to create legislation providing a consensus around definition and the basis for development of policy and strategy.